

on the map



LIFETIME DEVELOPMENTS

Liberty goes family

NEW DEVELOPMENT TAKES INTO ACCOUNT FIRST BUYERS ARE GETTING INTO CHILD-RAISING

MATTHEW HAGUE

Here's what you'll see if you're people-watching in Toronto's Liberty Village: nattily clad ad execs hopping out of Ubers, publicists grabbing coffee at Balzac's with clients, condo dwellers browsing minimal sofas at West Elm before grabbing brunch at one of several microbreweries. What you likely won't see is many parents pushing strollers between the office buildings and condo towers stuffed with single urban professionals.

But the demographics of the 'hood are poised to shift. In 2021, when Lifetime Developments completes its new, 28-storey Liberty Market Tower condo, just over 10 per cent of the 281 units will be family-friendly three bedrooms. "That's a lot for downtown Toronto," says Brian Brown, principal of Lifetime. "But I find that Liberty Village has really matured in a short period of time. The younger demographics who bought in over the last 15 years are now in their 30s and 40s, and they want to stay near where they live and work."

Brown has been witnessing the changes in Liberty Village since 2004, just after the area's first life as a manufacturing hub ended but well before its big old factories and warehouses had been turned into tech startups, lofts and coffee shops. "We had been working nearby on a project on Lake Shore," says Brown. "Which is how we became interested in Liberty Village. We couldn't see all the changes that were about to happen. But we could see potential."

So Lifetime acquired a six-acre parcel of land, including 37 Hanna, a struggling, three-storey commercial building that was derisively known as "dirty seven Hannah" by unkind locals and disaffected tenants. "A number of things weren't working in the building," says Brown. "The beautiful old heritage windows were either cracked or simply painted over with an ugly cream colour. The original brick was covered in aluminum siding. But Liberty Village was entirely different back then. East Liberty Street used to dead-end at a dirt road. Things have improved very, very rapidly, to the point where it's hard to imagine what it used to be like."

Lifetime's first project was to turn 37 Hanna around. Brown restored the building, fixing all the windows and stripping the aluminum. When East Liberty got paved and became the area's main thoroughfare, he reoriented the building, giving it a new address, 171 East Liberty, a new main entrance and a new name, Liberty Market. In the process, he more than quadrupled the number of commercial tenants, from fewer than 50 to more than 200, which includes everything from vape shops and restaurants to talent agencies and a BMO branch.

Lifetime's second project was to convert the southern edge of Liberty Market's sur-

face parking into a 13-storey loft building. "We wanted to animate the street, and have buildings right up to the sidewalk," says Brown. "We've also found that commercial buildings such as Liberty Market are more successful when they are near residential units, and vice versa. People like to live near where they can work, or where they can get their hair cut or buy clothing. And it helps businesses build strong relationships with clients when the clients live nearby."

The same sense of convenience is imbued in Lifetime's third, final and largest project in Liberty Village. A lobby will connect the new

Liberty Market Tower to the eastern side of the existing Liberty Market so residents won't have to go outside to access its shops and services.

Residents might not even have to leave their own tower to get to work. When completed, the first seven floors will be for commercial offices, meaning the morning commute might be little more than an elevator ride. The eighth floor will have more than 12,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor amenities, including a business centre for work-from-home types who don't actually like working in their own suites. For the rest of the residents, including families moving in who might be longing for

outdoor space, there will be an expansive alfresco dining terrace with views south to the Exhibition grounds and beyond to Lake Ontario. It will adjoin an indoor dining area, and be near a fitness centre and various party rooms ("there will be a lot of entertaining space," Brown says).

Also upping the convenience: Construction has already commenced, even though sales only started this January. "Because we're building the commercial space, which has had a lot of very strong interest, we've had the unusual ability to break ground well in advance of meeting a specific sales target," says Brown. For prospective residents, that helps reduce some of the guesswork about whether or not the building will go ahead — normally a nerve-racking issue when purchasing pre-construction. For Liberty Village, it's one more guarantee that the neighbourhood will grow, and change, in the next few years.

Units from \$400,000. For more information, visit libertymarketcondos.com or the sales centre at 171 East Liberty St.

Postmedia News

THREE THINGS

1. For prospective Liberty Village parents, Love Me Do offers stylish clothing and accessories for junior condo dwellers (think compact, clean-lined and achromatic playpens, cribs and high chairs). 50 Lynn Williams St.

2. Young kids might not have the patience to sit around a microbrewery while their parents try a flight of ales. But they will almost certainly enjoy brunch at Mildred's Temple Kitchen. The blueberry pancakes are a fluffy stack served with whipped cream, organic maple syrup and blueberry compote. 85 Hanna Ave.

3. It may be news to youngsters that long before Netflix and YouTube, people watched their favourite shows on televisions. The next generation can learn about that ancient invention at the MZTV Museum of Television, which has more than 10,000 artifacts dedicated to the boob tube. 64 Jefferson Ave.